PCT/AU2004/000816

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J. Billingsley

JULIE BILLINGSLEY
TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION
SUPPORT AND SALES

AUSTRALIA
Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

Invention Title:

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PHILANTHROPIC GIVING

Applicant:

GILLIAN LESLIE WALLACE

The invention is described in the following statement:

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PHILANTHROPIC GIVING

The present invention relates to a method and system for philanthropic giving, and more particularly to a method and system applicable to what has become generally known as "e-philanthropy".

E-philanthropy is a reference to the application of philanthropic mechanisms to an electronic environment, and in particular to e-commerce and e-business. E-philanthropy has been in existence in one form or another since the late 1990s with numerous organizations having "click-and-give" donation facilities active on their websites. One of the problems with these existing mechanisms is that many people are unaware of the websites, and many will often not think or wish to visit a specific website to make a philanthropic donation. The present invention is based on the premise that the more user-friendly and convenient e-philanthropy can become, the more likely it will be adopted as a tool for giving. The present invention is therefore concerned with providing a more user friendly and more convenient e-philanthropy method and system.

The present invention has particular application to what will be herein referred to as "micro-philanthropy". Micro philanthropy may be understood as the making of a number of small and apparently inconsequential donations over a period of time, such that a large number of these small donations combine to constitute a relatively substantial philanthropic contribution. The present invention will hereafter be described in this exemplary context, although it will be appreciated that the invention is not limited to the making of small donations.

Viewed from one aspect, the present invention provides a method of philanthropic giving including the steps of: establishing or identifying a primary procedure performed by a user within an electronic environment; and associating a secondary philanthropic procedure with the primary procedure, such that operation of the primary procedure is adapted to activate the secondary philanthropic procedure.

In a preferred form of the invention, the primary procedure is an action or a script of actions, the execution of which is typically initiated by a user event, such as a mouse click, pressing a key, or a voice command. The primary

procedure is one that is typically performed by the user on a relatively frequent basis. For example, the primary procedure may include any one or more of: sending an email, making an internet connection, conducting an internet transaction, creating a new word-processing document, downloading a file, entering a security password to access files or to access a network, or being connected to the internet for a predetermined period of time. In relation to this last example, the computer's clock may play a part in the step of triggering or activating the secondary procedure. The primary procedure performed by the user is itself preferably not commercial in nature; ie it is preferably not a commercial transaction.

In a preferred form of the invention, the secondary procedure involves allocating a contribution of predetermined value to a philanthropic cause, such as a charity. Accordingly, the method furthermore preferably includes the step of selecting or nominating the particular philanthropic cause to which the contribution is to be allocated during the secondary procedure. The contribution is typically a financial contribution in the form of a monetary pledge or donation.

In a preferred form of the invention, the method includes the step of selecting or nominating the value of the contribution to be allocated to the philanthropic cause during each execution of the secondary procedure. The contribution allocated in each execution of the secondary philanthropic procedure is most typically a nominal or small amount of money, since it will preferably be allocated on a relatively frequent basis. For example, a nominal predetermined value contribution may be in the range of about 5 cents to about one dollar. The present invention does, however, also contemplate higher contribution values.

In a preferred form of the invention, the method includes the step of: accruing a plurality of allocated contributions up to a predetermined accrued value, and subsequently transferring a sum having the predetermined accrued value to a designated holding account for the philanthropic cause. In one form of the invention, the step of transferring the sum occurs automatically, eg as an electronic transfer transaction, when the predetermined accrued value of the contributions is reached. In this regard, the user may be required to confirm or authorise actual transfer of the sum to a designated philanthropic fund. In an

alternative form, however, each of the allocated contributions may be transferred to a designated holding account individually.

In a preferred form of the invention, the method includes the step of establishing or identifying more than one said primary procedure associated with the secondary philanthropic procedure. Similarly, the method may also include the step of associating more than one said secondary philanthropic procedure with the primary procedure(s), such that operation of each primary procedure is adapted to activate at least one of the secondary philanthropic procedures.

In a preferred form of the invention, the method includes the step of enrolling or subscribing the user. This enrolling or subscribing step is typically performed by the user him/herself, and includes the logging of personal details of the user, such as name and address. The enrolling or subscribing step typically also includes nominating the one or more philanthropic causes to be the subject of the donations, determining the value of each allocated contribution, and selecting a mode of payment to be used to ultimately transfer the funds to the philanthropic cause(s). For example, the mode of payment may be by credit card, or by direct debit from a savings or other account. In such a case, the enrolling or subscribing step typically also includes logging of bank or financial institution account details to authorise such a transaction.

In a preferred form of the invention, the method is incorporated in a computer software system. More preferably, the method of the invention is incorporated in a computer software system that is designed to be installed and run on a personal computer. In this way, the software system may be made generally available to computer users both in the work place and in the domestic environment, providing the opportunity for individuals and organizations to incorporate philanthropic giving into their daily routine.

Viewed from another aspect, therefore, the present invention provides a software system designed to facilitate philanthropic giving, the system including: a mechanism for establishing or identifying one or more primary procedures to be performed by a user within an electronic environment; and means for associating a secondary philanthropic procedure with the primary procedure,

such that operation of the primary procedure automatically activates the secondary philanthropic procedure.

As stated above, the primary procedure is preferably one that is typically performed by the user on a relatively frequent basis, and may include any one or more of: sending an email, making an internet connection, being connected to the internet for a predetermined period of time, downloading data or files, entering a security password to access files or to access a network, creating a new word-processing document or the like. The primary procedure is therefore an action or a script of actions executed at the discretion of the user, and the execution of the primary procedure is typically initiated by a user event, such as a mouse click, pressing a key, or voice command.

The secondary procedure preferably involves allocating a contribution of predetermined value to a philanthropic cause, such as a charity. The contribution is typically a financial contribution in the form of a monetary pledge or donation.

In a preferred form of the invention, the software system is designed to allow a user to enrol or subscribe by, for example, entering his or her personal details, nominating one or more philanthropic causes to be the subject of the donations, determining the value of each allocated contribution, and selecting a mode of payment to a designated holding account of the or each philanthropic cause. For example, the mode of payment may be by credit card, or by direct debit from a savings or other account. Accordingly, the software system is preferably adapted to allow the user to enter banking or account details to authorise a payment transaction.

In a preferred form of the invention, the software system includes a multi-function transfer procedure (MFTP) for the automated transfer of funds from a specified account into another or several other specified accounts when triggered by operation of the primary procedure. That is, the MFTP is adapted to recognise the operation of the primary procedure and to activate the secondary philanthropic procedure. The secondary procedure may involve an automatic and instantaneous electronic transfer of each individual contribution to a specified account for the philanthropic cause. Alternatively, all of the contributions may be transferred to a single centralised account along with data

identifying the particular philanthropic cause to which the amounts are ultimately to be directed.

In a preferred form, the system of the invention optionally also includes means for making one-off philanthropic contributions. For example, the software system may provide a specific icon-type "button" adapted to be displayed for the user on a computer's desk-top, start menu or home-page. By selecting this action (eg by "clicking" this button), the user may be provided with the option for "instant giving" in one-off donations to the one or more pre-selected philanthropic cause.

An important preferred feature of the present invention is that donations may be made despite being of only a small or nominal value. However, due to the fact that transaction fees are often incurred during electronic financial transfers, it may be preferable to only actually make a financial transfer after an accrued sum becomes significant compared to any transaction fee. In a preferred form of the invention, therefore, the system is adapted to accrue the relatively minor amounts of money into larger sums before an electronic transfer of the money occurs. In this regard, the user may preferably specify or nominate the predetermined accrued value at which electronic transfer of funds is to occur.

In a preferred form of the invention, the MFTP is adapted to provide the user with an opportunity to pause, cancel or otherwise vary the electronic transfer, prior to the transaction actually taking place. In this regard, the software system may cause a symbol or icon to appear on a computer screen of the user, and by clicking on this symbol the user may alter or confirm details of the transfer. Furthermore, the user may be required to enter a pre-selected personalised security code before the electronic transfer of funds is able to proceed.

In a preferred form of the invention, the software system is adapted to maintain a record of the various individual contributions made by the user. That record may preferably be accessed and reviewed by the user at any time.

In a preferred form of the invention, the software system may include means for displaying an icon-type "button" on the computer desk-top, which button is adapted to operate as a trigger such that the user clicking the trigger

button activates the secondary procedure. The software system is preferably adapted to display the trigger button regardless of which program the user may be currently operating.

In a preferred form of the invention, the primary procedure operable to activate the secondary philanthropic procedure is the sending of an email, and the software system is be adapted to incorporate a stamp or logo within the email (for example, at the foot of the email) to make the recipient of the email aware that a donation has been made.

In a preferred form of the invention, the software system is adapted to run or operate in conjunction with a variety of other everyday software, including software for accessing the internet, sending and receiving emails, and word-processing.

The method and system of the present invention are thus able to offer an alternative to the irregular giving of larger amounts to philanthropic causes. In particular, it allows a person to readily incorporate philanthropic generosity into his/her daily life by providing a way for that person to contribute small amounts as he/she enjoys the day-to-day use of his/her computer to access the internet, send emails, create files or such-like activity. Furthermore, by making this sort of micro-philanthropy available to individual computer users creates the potential to dramatically expand the domain of philanthropic giving.

Finally, it will be appreciated that various alterations and/or additions may be introduced into the particular construction and arrangement of the method and system of the invention described herein without departing from the spirit or ambit of the present invention.

DATED : 20 June 2003

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